

## Kreisman Initiative Housing Challenge Application Overview 2025

The competition is open to all students at the University of Chicago, both undergraduate and graduate.

The deadline to register and submit a short proposal is February 15, 2025. A select number of teams will be invited the following week on February 22, 2025 to submit full proposals.

Proposals should be innovative as well as feasible. They should be well-reasoned, financially realistic, and locationally explicit.

### Team formation

For this challenge, students with a diverse range of backgrounds, interests and skill sets will be needed. Specifically, some engagement with the following areas is needed: housing policy, urban planning, housing development and finance, stakeholder engagement, data analysis, and GIS. At least one member of the team will need to perform basic GIS tasks for the locational aspects of the proposal. GIS will be needed to identify available land and buildings suitable for new housing development or rehabilitation/conversion. Submissions must include maps that identify housing supply strategies.

We realize that students may need help with team formation. Students with GIS experience might not have exposure to housing policy or financing, and vice versa. We encourage you to [sign up with this Google Sheet](#) to indicate your interests, skills, and to find others looking for teammates.

### How to Apply

Initial round: Short proposals

- Short proposals are limited to 2 pages. This does not include team member information.
- Name, contact information, and degree program for all team members;
- A one-page résumé for each team member
- 500-word statement that covers the following:
  - Conceptual framework: What is your over-arching idea and main approach? In what way is your proposal innovative?
  - Funding strategies: Outline, in general terms, the main funding strategies and programmatic innovations your team will propose.
  - Planning and design: In general terms, where will units be developed, rehabbed or converted. On vacant land that the City owns? In abandoned buildings? In backyards as Accessory Dwelling Units? What designs and housing types do you imagine will be most utilized?

Finalists: Full proposals

- 2,000-word proposal that includes the following:
  - Executive summary: Summarize your main ideas: the What, How and Where or your proposal.
  - Funding strategies: Explain the main funding strategies your team will use, and the rationale behind each. Estimate how many units will be provided via each funding source, or combination of funding sources. A detailed financial analysis is not required or expected. Instead, list potential funding streams and what the expected contribution would be, from government programs, private investment, non-profits or philanthropy, or community contributions. Teams might provide ballpark estimates of how different funding sources align with aspects of the overall approach (e.g., construction costs, land acquisition, or operating subsidies).

- o Maps: Provide 4-6 maps of the following:
  - An overview map indicating where units are to be developed, rehabbed or converted. Provide a legend that differentiates housing types and strategies.
  - One or more additional maps that convey the locational advantages or disadvantages of proposed housing locations, for example in terms of proximity to amenities, jobs, and transit.
  - One or more additional maps that provide more detail, covering smaller areas or zooming in on neighborhood examples.
- o Housing types: Provide prototypical examples of envisioned housing types. Teams are not expected to provide original designs – prototypes can be taken from any source with proper citation.
- o Stakeholders, engagement, and challenges: How will your team sell your proposal ideas? What are the political requirements and community engagement strategies? Who are the key stakeholders? What will be the main challenges and limitations involved in implementing your proposal?

Proposals will need to include the following aspects of supply side housing:

**What.** Growing the supply will include one or more of the following:

- New development, perhaps on currently under-utilized or vacant land
- Increasing the capacity of existing structures, for example by adding building height
- Rehabilitation, perhaps of abandoned structures
- Adaptive reuse, involving the transitioning of industrial, office, or commercial properties to housing

- Conversion, for example, from single-family housing properties to multi-family housing

**How.** Teams will need to consider how affordable rental housing will be sustained. The following are examples of possible options to include:

- Zoning and regulatory strategies - upzoning for higher density, inclusionary zoning, streamlining approvals, accessory dwelling units (ADUs)
- Financial mechanisms - affordable housing bonds, revolving loan funds, property tax abatements, vouchers and rent subsidies, housing trust funds, low-cost financing to developers
- Land-based strategies - use public land for affordable housing development, land value capture mechanisms, land contributions
- Reuse and development of properties - redevelop vacant one-to-four-unit buildings, adaptive reuse of underutilized buildings, tax lien and auction purchases
- Housing program innovations - lease-to-build programs, shared equity housing models, employer-assisted housing programs
- Housing access and affordability - expand housing choice voucher acceptance, create acquisition pools for property assembly

\*\*Note: some strategies, such as zoning and regulatory strategies, will need to be combined with other programs or mechanisms to ensure long-term affordability.

Check this [document](#) for hints and ideas for housing strategies and policy inspiration.

**Where.** Teams will need to address the planning and design particulars of their proposals – where will the 126,125 housing affordable rental units be located and

what types of housing is envisioned? Team should be as specific as possible, identifying available areas for new development and existing buildings or parcels available for increased capacity, rehabilitation, adaptive reuse, or conversion. To accomplish this, GIS data and resources will be made available (see “Data” below). In addition to maps specify housing supply location, teams will be expected to provide prototypical designs of their proposed housing types, including new construction as well as adaptive reuse and renovation.

### Resources

PolicyLink is a great resource for a wide variety of tools aimed at increasing the supply of affordable housing. Check out the Policy Toolkit section under Housing/Anti-Displacement:  
<https://www.policylink.org/resources-tools/tools/all-in-cities/housing-anti-displacement>.

A community land trust (CLT) is a non-profit organization that acquires and manages land and buildings to guarantee housing affordability. For more on CLTs, see [Grounded Solutions](#) Network, [Democracy Collaborative](#), and [Lincoln Land Institute](#) .

The Urban Institute produced a report titled *Innovative Financing Approaches for Affordable Rental Housing in the Chicago Region*, available [here](#).

For inspiration about fitting in new housing development, see this article by architect Vishaan Chakrabarti, [How to Make Room for One Million New Yorkers](#).

### Data

To help teams with the locational aspects of their proposals, we have made available four shapefiles available at the link below:

Data: <https://uchicago.box.com/s/md81iabyka2862kox4b7q5z72smphm9a>

1. Single-family parcels

- a. File name: Single\_family\_parcel.zip
- b. Source: Multiple sources, including the Cook County Tax Assessor.

The usecode for this dataset is available [here](#) (the shapefile table excludes the dashes)

2. Vacant buildings

- a. File name: Vacant\_bldgs.zip
- b. Source: City of Chicago data portal, [Vacant and Abandoned Buildings - Violations](#)

3. Vacant land

- a. File name: Vacant\_land.zip
- b. Source: Multiple sources, including the City of Chicago. Vacant land is made up of parcels with < 20% building footprint area; excludes parks.

The usecode for this dataset is available [here](#) (the shapefile table excludes the dashes)

4. City-owned properties

- a. File name: City\_owned.zip
- b. Source: City of Chicago data portal, [City-Owned Land Inventory](#)

In addition to these datasets, teams should explore other data available from Cook County and the City of Chicago:

- Cook County data portal: <https://datacatalog.cookcountyil.gov/>
- City of Chicago data portal: <https://data.cityofchicago.org/>

Dataset Disclaimer:

The datasets provided for this challenge are made available for educational and contest purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data, we cannot guarantee that the datasets are free from errors, inconsistencies, or omissions.

The datasets are intended for use exclusively by registered challenge participants and their teams. Sharing, distributing, or otherwise making the datasets available to individuals or entities outside of your team is strictly prohibited.